

A D D R E S S

TO THE

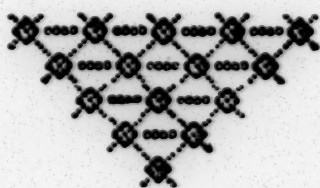
ANNUAL MEETING

OF THE

SCOTS SOCIETY

At NORWICH,

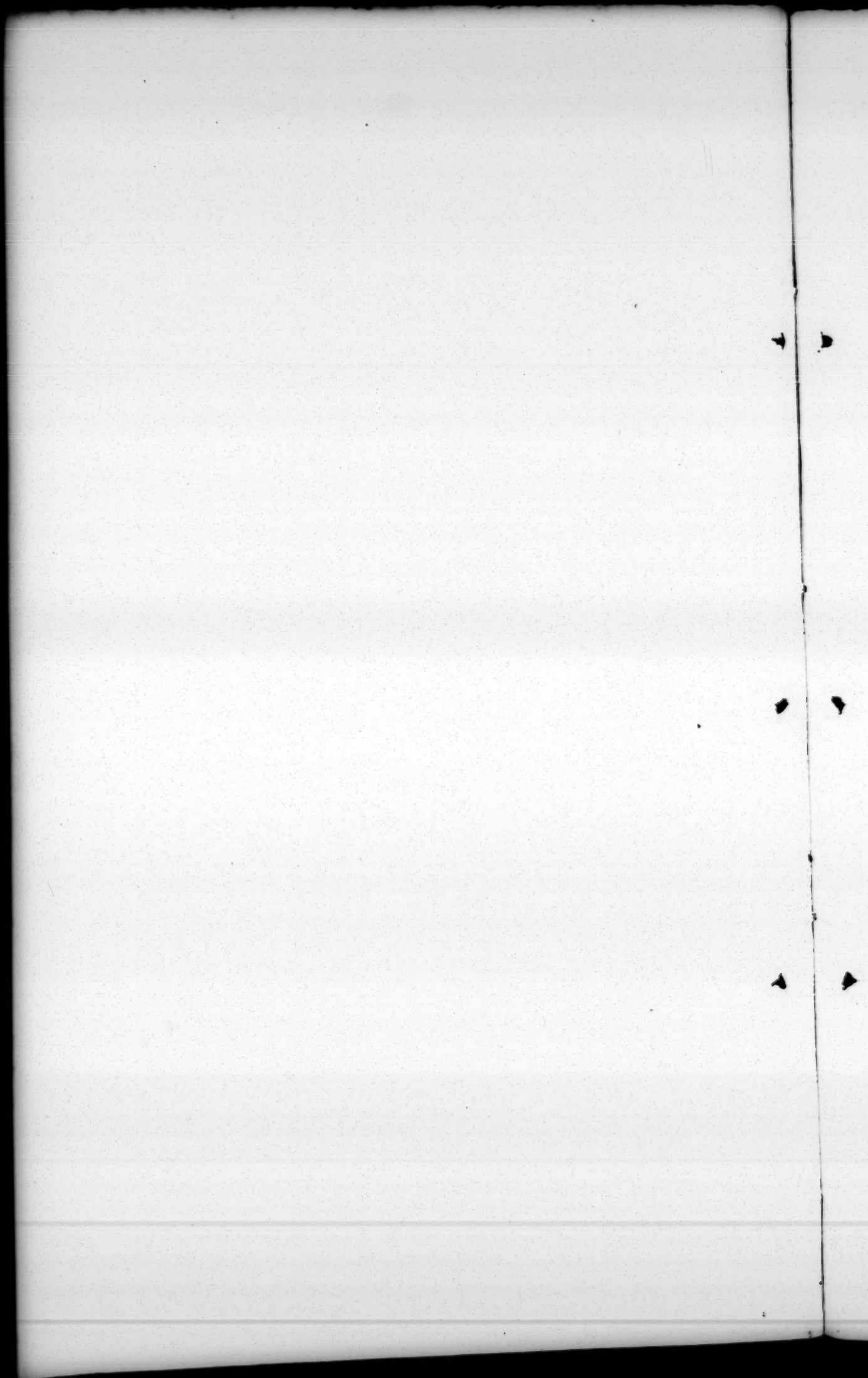
On the 30th of November, 1779.



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November 30, 1779.

GENTLEMEN,

WHEN we consider the low beginning of this society, and view its present situation, it is difficult to say, whether our surprize or satisfaction must be the greatest.

Those who were present at the beginning of this society, may well remember, that our first design was only to assist and relieve such natives of Scotland, as should fall into distress in this city and its neighbourhood, and who by the law of England were excluded

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cluded from parish relief, as not having obtained a regular settlement, according to the tenor of that law.

We found it necessary, at our first institution, to fix and establish a certain sum to form a capital, which having been once obtained, all future collections and subscriptions were to be employed as occasion might require, for the purpose just mentioned.

At our first outset, our views were confined, and our hopes were small; we were few in number, and of little importance in the place of our residence.

As no society can subsist without form, a few rules, equally imperfect and incoherent, were agreed upon, rather expressive of our wishes than our hopes.

It was proposed to communicate our design to a Nobleman, who is a native of Scotland, and possessed of a considerable estate in this neighbourhood, and to lay before him a copy of our first Articles.

We were soon after honoured with a letter under his Lordship's own hand, informing us not only of his approbation, but of his resolution to assist us.

Now animated by an almost certain hope of success, we revised our first Articles, and improved our plan; in prosecuting which it occurred to us, that
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not the natives of Scotland alone, but that all the subjects of Great Britain, not born in England, and the natives of all foreign nations, coming into it, were equally excluded from all legal relief, let their distress, or the causes thereof be ever so great or unavoidable; and that it stood upon record, that a learned and popular Judge had established it as a position in the English law, "That a stranger coming
 " into England, and not having obtained a proper
 " parish settlement, was not entitled to parish relief,
 " that no body was obliged to relieve him, BUT
 " THAT THEY MIGHT LET HIM STARVE."

Burn's Justice. last edit. vol. iii. p. 307.

It becomes not us to censure, or make any reflections on a position so opposite to the known generosity and humanity of our fellow subjects; suffice it to say, that it occasionally exposes an immense number of individuals to a most disagreeable prospect, while under the fear or pressure of misfortunes "in a strange land."

While then we were framing a new set of Articles, providing the means, and establishing the method of relieving our countrymen, thus excluded from the benefit of the English poor laws, a wish arose, that the same advantages might be extended to all others, who were in the same situation, as the natives of Scotland. This idea was inserted by way of note, under the introduction to our second articles.

Our society thus established, as a mark of its gratitude to the Right Honorable the Earl of Rosebery, for his approbation and encouragement, unanimously elected his Lordship Governor, and sent him a copy of its new articles. In these it was specified, that as soon as the fund of the society should amount to upwards of twenty pounds, the overplus of that sum should be allotted to the relief of all natives of Scotland in distress, who not being entitled to the benefit of the poor laws of England, should apply for assistance.

We were gradually creeping forward in our design, when our Governor arriving at his seat near Norwich, was waited upon by the President and Steward.

As a farther proof of his approbation, his Lordship was pleased to present the sum required for its capital, and at once enabled it to begin the application of its charity, for which several objects of distress soon applied, and were effectually relieved.

Our Governor having also signified his approbation of the purpose to extend our charity as above-mentioned, at the ensuing annual meeting, the stock of the society having increased to upwards of fifty pounds, a resolution was made, that the charity should be opened to all British subjects, and foreigners residing in England, and not entitled to parish relief,

relief, in the same manner as to those of Scotland, as soon as the fund should exceed the sum of one hundred pounds.

We have been so fortunate in the management of our affairs, and in forming the above resolution, that our noble Governor was pleased, by a second benefaction, to enlarge our fund to the sum we had proposed for the commencement of Universal Charity, in the course of the by-past year.

The proceedings and transactions of the society, since the last annual meeting, have been read and related to you at full length, according to custom, and I am happy to find that they have met with your entire approbation.

Our plan having now reached to, perhaps, its full extent, you must be sensible that the late articles and regulations, are in many respects insufficient for our future management and conduct; others, therefore, more suitable to our present situation and design have been drawn out, and just read to you, which, when revised and improved, will, I hope, fully answer the purposes we have in view, and may with your approbation and direction, be printed for the use of the society.

While we were a private body, and our Charity confined to the natives of that nation only, which gave and

all gives name to the society, our conduct was of small importance; for not being under the eye of the public, we could neither receive benefit nor injury from its opinions: but having of late informed the world of our establishment and designs, it is incumbent upon us to conduct ourselves in such a manner, as not only to avoid censure as much as possible, but to deserve approbation and support.

If ever any society has been founded upon the principles of virtue and disinterestedness, I hope it will be allowed that this is one. Brotherly love, and universal benevolence, laid the foundation of this small body; and while it rests upon those strong pillars of Christianity, we have reason to hope, that it will be secure and lasting; but you will give me leave to foretell, that the moment you adopt other principles, this society will share the fate of all others, great and small, which have given way to ambition, avarice, jealousy, selfishness, and party disputes.

Our rule of conduct is at present so plain and simple, that it may perhaps be deemed unnecessary to attempt to give any advice concerning it; yet I hope you will excuse my endeavouring to point out, what I suppose to be the duty of every member and associate in this new view of things, before I resign the office, with which you have so often honoured me.

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The first thing that I beg leave to recommend to every person belonging to or having any connection with this society, is not only to have a real affection for its establishment, but a zeal for its success. The next is regularity, method, and unanimity in our proceedings. Where a number of men meet together, it is impossible to avoid a variety of opinions, but where every one sincerely means the good of the whole, difference of opinion, and rational, liberal opposition, will severally promote the public welfare. It is therefore the duty, and I hope it will ever be the wish of us all, to support the credit and promote the purposes of this society; not only in its present infant and feeble state, but as it gradually advances to strength and perfection.

I have already heard of some objections without doors, which I have endeavoured to answer; there are also those who express doubts and fears about our success. I could wish that every thing of that kind should be exposed openly at the meetings of the society, that it might be duly and properly attended to. Many have been ruined in private life, by insinuations, doubts, fears and whispers, which, like lying fame, spread faster, increasing in their progress, and do more mischief than open accusations and public attacks. May I hope that no persons of this description belong to this society? or if any such there be, that they will immediately alter their conduct. Yet let us not flatter ourselves that this
society

society can escape censure, ridicule, and obloquy. One who well knew the hearts and dispositions of men has said, "Wo unto you, when all men shall speak well of you."

We are now before the public: we may be said to have aimed at being Stewards for the whole world. The public has a right, and may it ever enjoy it, to enquire into and give its opinion of our general and particular conduct; nor can we claim favour, or expect countenance, much less support, a moment longer, than we can give fair and reasonable satisfaction to all enquirers. Let every member therefore, but more especially those delegated to manage the affairs of this society, act under the constant sense of being, at all times, liable to be called to a strict account of their conduct and stewardship.

It may be asked, Who is sufficient for those things; who will chuse to act under conditions of office so difficult and dangerous? In my humble opinion, only three qualifications, within every man's reach, are required to give reasonable satisfaction in public or private life to all concerned, Common Sense, Industry, and Honesty. Those form the right and strait line of life for all sorts and conditions of men, in the management of public and private affairs; they who swerve from any or all of them, must expect shame, poverty, contempt and disgrace.

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The highest stations have been filled with credit, and the most important purposes executed, by men of common talents, real integrity, and persevering assiduity; while families have been ruined, societies destroyed, and empires lost, by those of the most splendid connections and greatest abilities, but of corrupt morals: when such even mean and seem to do well, their wisdom is often turned into foolishness. Therefore, while virtue and strict probity, joined with sincere charity, continue to guide our proceedings, we may hope that there never will be wanting those qualified to conduct our affairs in a proper manner. Let us then, by all means, be steady to maintain the original purposes and constitution of the society, and cautious of admitting men of bad or even suspicious characters, to the offices of trust or management.

Should the designs of this society, now published to the world, acquire the favour and merit the good opinion of the public, there is reason to suppose, that it will have an extensive and frequent correspondence upon a variety of subjects, which may require consultation among the members and associates; but as frequent meetings of the whole might be inconvenient, and too expensive to many, it has been thought proper to add a small council to the standing officers of the society, who may direct what is proper to be done from time to time, and lay their proceedings before the quarterly and annual meetings.

In case however any thing of considerable importance, and general concern, should occur, there is still a power to convene an extraordinary meeting of the whole society as heretofore.

Had the members of this society at its first institution, or subsequent meetings, in the least regarded their own interest, they would, after the example of others, either have confined their charity to such as had contributed to the general fund, or to the needy of their native country only, in the place or neighbourhood of the society's establishment; but altho' such measures were by some suggested, yet it was thought improper to limit its charity by any other bounds, than those of that law, which laid the foundation of the society, and pointed out the necessity of securing the natives of Scotland in the first place, those again of all foreign nations, and lastly all British subjects not born in England, from the dangerous effects thereof. To all those it is now extended under certain regulations, and I hope the two last classes of men will henceforth reap the same advantage from it, as those of the first already have received.

When those who have seen better days are reduced to ask and take relief of a parish, their allowance is generally small, their pittance often insufficient for its purpose, and the manner of granting it almost as disagreeable as want itself. Sicknefs, unforeseen accidents, or sudden death, frequently falls to the lot
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of an honest, industrious head of a large family, and in an instant throws the whole into the utmost distress and want.

What has happened to the members of every other society, may some time or other befall those of this; and it should seem hard, that the man who has, according to his abilities, contributed to the relief of others, should be excluded from any benefit out of the treasure he has assisted to increase, or that his remains should regret the money given to a charitable fund, which, had it been saved, might have afforded some relief to their present necessities.

A new article (28) is now introduced to obviate such events, and pains have been taken to prevent any bad consequences from accruing to the interest or reputation of the Charity at large, from the application of it. Yet upon reflection, I have a kind of misgiving concerning the reception this new article may meet with from the public.

This society set out with the most liberal purposes and most disinterested views, but this alteration may be construed into an original selfishness, lurking under the mask of extensive charity, one of the characteristics of which is, that *she seeketh not her own*; this part of her description seems capable of bearing a meaning opposite to the letter and spirit of this new article. Suppose then that a separate fund was
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established for the very purpose of relieving members and associates, or their families, in cases of distress, under the title of, A Domestic or Private Fund.*

There is not perhaps a set of men, who deserve better of society in general, or whose conduct corresponds more with their high calling, than the Clergy of the established Church of Scotland, none of whom can, from their livings, acquire wealth, few more than a bare subsistence. Most of those have families, and some very numerous, struggle through life with great difficulty, and at their death were wont to leave their wives and children in great distress, generally without fortune, sometimes by casual removals without friends.—Between thirty and forty years ago, a plan was formed for the relief of Clergymens widows and families in Scotland, and a fund raised in consequence thereof, of which the following was established as the mode of application ; “ That whoever paid any particular sum to this fund, and should live a specified term afterwards, (I believe not above a year or two) his family should be entitled at his death, whether sooner or later, to an annuity for one life equal to the sum at first deposited.”

Few people at that time imagined that such a plan would answer in the event, yet at the end of twenty years,

* A foundation for such a fund was laid at the first meeting of the society, soon after the above was read.

years, if I remember right, a small balance was found in favour of the fund. This being the case, it is a matter of wonder that other societies have not adopted some scheme of the same kind.

It is hard to say whether the abuse of power, or impatience of rule, has most tended to disquiet the minds and disturb the peace of mankind; there are few societies, great or small, which have not suffered, and many have been destroyed by both of these causes. Could we be certain that this society would always retain its native simplicity, and remain in its present virtuous state, there would be no occasion to guard against either of those evils; but as our own observation, and almost every page of history inform us of the pernicious effects of both, it has been thought proper to introduce two articles (38 & 39) to prevent their bad consequences; but it is hoped that those articles will ever remain as a dead letter, and an useless rod. Should however a spirit of dissension or disorder at any time arise in this society, or any of its branches, from either of the causes just mentioned, which may affect the peace, or threaten the destruction thereof, a method is proposed to put an immediate stop to it, and prevent all the ill consequences of discord and disunion.

The design and plan of this society being laid before the public, it is proper to consider how far it ought, and by what means it best MAY be extended, so as fully to answer its purposes.

Every nation and government, which have or may have connections with England, and whose natives of the middle or lower class, shall come and fix their residence there, and from the common misfortunes of life, fall into distress, and become objects of our care, should seem to be interested in our success. The society therefore humbly hopes, that as soon as its establishment is generally known, and its proceedings approved of, it will meet with encouragement from the humane of all nations. It has already received so many marks of favour from the natives of England, influenced by motives of humanity and charity alone, that it has no reason to doubt the continuance of support from its generous fellow subjects, so long as support shall be merited.

As it has a natural claim upon the benevolence of that kingdom, for the benefit of whose natives it was first instituted, and whose name it still bears, we will not, we cannot suppose that it will ever experience a want of friendship from its native land; for such is the connection between the two united kingdoms, that there is scarce a parish, perhaps not a family in Scotland, which hath not some connections in England, many of whom, by unavoidable misfortunes, may become objects of the attention and assistance of this society, and who being by it relieved, may prevent the illiberal national reflections, too often made by their more opulent neighbours.

Ireland

Ireland stands nearly upon the same level with Scotland; three of its natives have already felt the good effects of the late extension of our plan; and as it is well known, that many natives of the lower class frequently emigrate into England, several of them are occasionally overtaken by great distress, and of course fall under the line of our charity; we may hope that the humane and opulent belonging to that kingdom, will enable us to assist their countrymen with a liberal hand.

Whenever the intercourse between Great Britain and revolted America is renewed, and any natives or inhabitants of that, once hospitable shore, shall apply for relief from this society, they will certainly be gratified to the utmost of our power, without regard to what has lately passed. It is hoped then, that such of that land, who have still to spare, and those who wish it well, whatever their political opinions may be, will not withhold their charity from a society, which only waits for the power and the opportunity, to wipe the tear of distress from every cheek, not entitled to assistance from others. Let it however be remembered, that a considerable part of North America, still acknowledges the British authority; most parts of the East and West Indies are also ours: to the natives of those who need, we shall ever be ready to give relief, and from the opulent who reside there, or arrive from thence, we may expect support. It may seem absurd to imagine, that any poor can come from the last named

corner of the globe; but whoever has seen, or remembers the history of the ignorant Lascars, who were brought to England by Lord Anson, and afterwards abandoned by government, will rejoice that such a national disgrace may be prevented from happening again, by means of this society. Those poor wretches, having experienced every kind of want, were at last taken under the protection of the East-India company, and by it forwarded to their native home, at least as many of them as survived their misfortune.

There are also various descriptions of men, who may be inclined to contribute to the establishment and support of this beginning society.

Agriculture, arts, manufactures and commerce, have severally contributed to the opulence and happiness of this still free nation: all of those have been promoted, some in a manner created by foreigners. Many families of high rank, many manufacturers of great wealth and eminence, have sprung from those, and are still in being. Is it not then natural to suppose, that the descendants of such should espouse the interests, and desire to alleviate the distresses of those who bear the same title as their forefathers did?

There is not perhaps a nation upon earth, the Swiss excepted, who are fonder of a military life, than the natives of Ireland and Scotland, nor are any troops,
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or sailors, more esteemed for courage and resolution. Both Scots and Irish soldiers, when their regiments are quartered in England, or if sailors, when the ships of war to which they belong are stationed on the English coasts, often marry English women. Those when reduced, paid off, superannuated, or after having obtained their discharge, frequently fix their residence among the connections of their wives and rear large families, without gaining parish settlements. While youth or strength remains, they feel and fear no want; but as old age advances, and the arm grows weak, they begin to find their slender income insufficient for their support, and poverty with all its horrors approaches fast upon them.

I know of no character more respectable than that of a sensible old foldier or sailor, who can, like Nestor, with truth relate the atchievements of his youth, I know of no distress more pitiable, than such as fall into the situation of a Belisarius, especially when surrounded by a good wife and helpless children. Will not military officers then of every rank, who have served with such men, and know their value, assist this society, to grant full relief to those ancient servants of their king and country, some of whom we have already relieved, and we have still one upon our list?

Can it be doubted that we shall meet with approbation and support, from such as have devoted their

time, their study and their lives, to the service of a master, whose life, whose death was one continued act of charity and doing good, who has pronounced the love of one another to be the true and almost the only distinguishing mark of his followers and disciples, and who has declared that whatever kindness is shewn to such as are in great distress, even of the lowest class, he regards as done to himself? Those who minister about holy things, who have enough and to spare, are generally the foremost and most liberal in other charities; may we not therefore reasonably conclude, that as soon as the principles and conduct of this society are known, and found equal to the purposes thereof, they will liberally contribute to and generously assist in this our labour of love?

To accomplish every design of this society, and answer all its views, it will be proper that its establishment should be as generally known, and its institution as far extended, as the advantages likely to result from it may require.

The objects of this society's attention, according to its present enlarged views, being dispersed throughout the kingdom of England, particularly in the Capital, in large manufacturing and sea-port towns it must appear difficult to extend its bounty effectually to all, nor is the present small fund by any means equal to such a purpose. It was at first proposed to
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accomplish its purposes, by establishing agents in different parts, to receive subscriptions and benefactions, and to disburse what was needful to relieve those entitled to our charity, for which an article is still in force; but upon more mature deliberation, it has been thought proper to establish societies upon the principles connected with and dependent upon the original society, as a parent stock. An article (34) is framed upon this idea, which may be carried into execution wherever the same sentiments prevail, which gave rise to this society.

A general connection, and one common fund, should seem the most probable means of accomplishing the purposes, and ascertaining the continuance of this, at present, feeble body; but if any set of men, actuated by the same motives, should choose to form an association for the like purposes, on the same, or a better plan, we shall not only wish them success, but be very happy to assist and join in contributing to their design, readily receiving and giving advice, as circumstances may require.

It is my duty, before I quit the chair, to inform you, that the instructions formerly printed for our agents, have been universally approved of; but as they were written in the supposition, that the charity of the society would be confined to the natives of Scotland only, they must now be found defective, and unequal to the extensive plan lately entered upon,

on, I beg leave to recommend that directions should be given to revise and adapt them properly to the present views of the society.

I submit to your opinion, how far it may be right, to empower those whom you shall appoint to the management of this young society, to alter or suspend the operation of any article or law belonging to it, which may be found detrimental to the interests or insufficient for the purposes thereof, in the interval of its meetings. It is, I must confess, dangerous to change, suspend, or tamper with the rules or established forms of any public body; but as unexpected events may occur, unprovided for and unforeseen difficulties may arise, especially at our first outset, which may require immediate dispatch and decisive conduct, those in power should be enabled to guard the community against injury, and prosecute its interests in the most effectual manner, still being accountable to the subsequent quarterly and annual meetings for their proceedings.

I fear I have too long trespassed on your patience, therefore beg leave to conclude, with again expressing my hope and wish, that all who now, or may hereafter belong to this society, will constantly bear in mind the obscurity of its origin, and its still uncertain state, so as not to be elated by the encouragement it has met with, nor become presumptuous from the agreeable prospects now in its view; but
that

that all of us, both in public and private, may conduct ourselves with integrity, humility, meekness and universal good-will, particularly to such, who from various causes may become the objects of relief and assistance from the

Scots Society in Norwich,

